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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the first phase of a feasibility study to determine the current status of distance education in Europe and to propose a coordinated international program of distance education for higher education and vocational training education. The first section presents the options agreed upon by the representatives of education ministries who had been consulted at a June 26, 1990 distance education meeting in Strasbourg. The second section analyzes some of the international activity in distance education in 1990, and discusses the Council of Europe's part in that activity. It is noted that the use of distance education technologies has caused several changes in teaching and educational strategies. These changes and a discussion of obstacles to distance education are included in section 3. The final section describes ways in which distance education may stabilize in the future, and ways to strengthen the link between distance education and social objectives through the development of information networks. Appended are the minutes of the June 26 meeting on the feasibility of a pan-European distance learning resource, and proposals for action in 1991, which include studies and reports, training of specialists, and topics for seminars. (DB)

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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION
(CDCC)

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Strasbourg, 10-12 April 1991

Distance learning

Feasibility study on distance learning in a wider Europe. (Interim report 1990)

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This report covers the first phase of the feasibility study. Chapter I sets out the options agreed at the meeting in Strasbourg on 26 June by a gathering of representatives from ministries and experts. Chapter II analyses the intense international activity in distance learning in 1990 and the Council of Europe's part in that activity. This swarming activity shows that this mode of teaching is undergoing a rapid transition and the observer is prompted to ask: towards what? This question is dealt with in Chapter III. Hypotheses are put forward as to how the situation will stabilise and tentative suggestions made for a strategy. The actions which follow from this make up the programme of activities for 1992. They are described in Chapter IV.

1. Options agreed at the meeting of 26 June 1990

On 26 June, DECS held a meeting in Strasbourg of representatives of Education Ministries and experts who had been consulted on the drafting of the initial report on the feasibility of a distance learning system for a wider Europe. The following basic premises were recalled at the outset:

- the work to be undertaken must complement that of the Commission of the European Communities, preliminary contacts having been made to that effect,

- the accession of Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia to the Cultural Convention and the applications made by Romania, Bulgaria and the USSR make the Council of Europe a practical framework for action in the field of education and culture covering Europe as a whole,

- the CDCC is anxious that the development of distance learning should be conceived in such a way as to be geared constantly to cultural and social demand, whereas it often favours technical and economic aspects instead.

The participants descibed their organisations' activities and exchanged views on the introductory report. Unanimous agreement quickly emerged as to the usefulness of Council of Europe action in distance learning, working towards networking of existing providers, preferably with the establishment of a European distance learning university. In the course of the meeting, this role was outlined in the form of the following four proposals:

First proposal - Distance-learning provision for initial education and continuing education must be dovetailed with ongoing analysis of needs.

This proposal echoes the introductory report, which emphasised education demand, particularly for adults, which face-to-face education provision cannot cope with, either today or in the ten years ahead, particularly where the active population is concerned. Furthermore, very little is yet known about the intellectual and social profile of people following courses of distance education.

Second proposal - The action of providers investing in distance education should be boosted by interaction between them.

The major providers, who were nearly all represented at the 26 June meeting, viz BUDAPEST PLATFORM, CHANNEL E, EADTU, EUROPACE, EUROSTEP, EUROTRANSMED, ICDE, SATURN, recognised the value of co-ordination with the Council of Europe in order to define strategy.

Third proposal - A telecommunication reference model needs to be constructed, tailored to the requirements of Greater Europe, particularly covering the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

This model must take into account the size of the geographical areas concerned and the diversity of existing telecommunications infrastructures. It must also facilitate the interaction necessary to the international development of distance education.

Fourth proposal - Statutory provisions should be harmonised in order to foster the development of distance learning.

The Council of Europe is particularly well-equipped to further the necessary harmonisation in the following fields:

- recognition and international validity of qualifications awarded,

- legislation governing copyright for written and audiovisual course material and educational software,

- post and telecommunications tariffs and in particular, alignment of exemptions on those applying in the most favoured countries,

- legislation governing satellite broadcasting of educational programmes,

- telecommunications and multi-media carrier standards (RAVI, ISO, HDEE).

A report of the meeting will be found at Appendix 1.

II. International activity in the second half of 1990

The second half of 1990 saw intense international activity. Two themes clearly dominated in the various gatherings of experts: the application of distance learning methods to higher education and vocational training, and the structuring of an international network.

II.1 Higher education and vocational training

Two important milestones deserve mention. One was an international colloquy on vocational training, the other an analysis being conducted by the Commission.

II.1.1 The CNED Colloquy in Strasbourg

A Council of Europe sponsored international colloquy organised by CNED was held in Strasbourg in late June. The participants first, on the subject of outstanding applications, noted the real value of distance learning in various areas of vocational training. In particular, they made the following recommendations:

- distance learning, until recently a fringe activity, is now becoming a fully-fledged component of education provision,

- in many cases it has to effect the transition from an approach focusing exclusively on the individual to a project approach dealing with some kind of whole, whether it be a business, a branch of industry or an employment area, for example,

- it has to succeed in changing scale. Hitherto, projects have been very limited in size. Training needs demand rescaling,

- it is proving indispensable to break down barriers within and between institutions,

- there is an urgent need to train specialists in the new occupations generated by this method.

II.1.2 A meeting of the Commission

The Council of Ministers of Education discussed distance education and training at its meeting on 31 May 1990. One of the items on the agenda concerned member states' priorities in this field, bearing in mind the state of the internal markets and national policies for education and vocational training. Following this initial discussion, a meeting of experts was held in Brussels, to which the Council of Europe was invited to send an observer. One of the aims of this meeting was "... to present recent developments in the field ... both in higher education and in initial and in-service vocational training ...".

The Commission, like the Council of Europe, believes that distance learning can meet the growing needs for both conventional and new qualifications in Europe, especially in the least-favoured regions of the Community. It is considering the best ways of organising the transferability of courses and credit units, as well as the production of educational material that can be broadcast on a European scale. Two of its conclusions directly concern this question.

The first recognises the indisputable needs of small and medium-sized businesses but also acknowledges the difficulty of reaching them and informing them about the usefulness of distance learning. The second analyses the differing needs of target groups (small and medium-sized businesses, employees in rural and less developed areas) and the media best suited to such groups, including conventional distance learning media (1).

- Analysis of skill shortages

Representatives of the task force told us of their concern to better relate the development of distance learning methods to forecasts of qualification needs (2).

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(1) EEC. Task Force Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth, Report of the meeting of national experts on distance learning and training, Brussels 1-2 October 1990, 8 pages, roneoed.

(2) I thank MM Charters de Azevedo and de Vocht of the task force for kindly supplying working papers, in particular an IRDAC draft, Skills Shortages, report of IRDAC Working Party 11 on Education and Training (sub-group Skills Shortages), Draft, 21 September 1990. The analysis which follows relies on a study of these documents by Hélène Papadoudi.

In 1989, the Commission's Industrial Research and Development Advisory Committee (IRDAC) set up a working party on education topics related to the competitiveness of industry in the EEC. The working party recognises that sound, coherent basic information has so far been lacking at European level about future skills requirements and about present and future shortages. The subject analysed, skills shortage, refers to the disparity on the labour market between the available stock of qualifications and the qualifications in demand. In its provisional form, the report makes an number of proposals for relating training systems more closely to changing needs. Distance learning occupies a prominent position in those proposals. Its flexibility and recourse to various media are highlighted and a major structural effort is advocated to foster its development in Europe.

The various meetings and studies we have just mentioned show a remarkable degree of convergence, particularly on four points:

- distance learning is a training technique which lends itself well to the requirements of higher education and vocational training,

- but information about the nature of requirements, changes in requirements, and the users is still too sparse and needs to be substantially developed,

- small and medium-sized businesses and the regions are very poorly informed about the advantages of distance learning. Here too, a substantial effort needs to be made.

- all these considerations warrant intensifying and structuring international co-operation between distance learning institutions.

The linchpin between higher education and continuing education is the training and retraining of teaching staff. In this area, distance learning can play a major role, by maintaining a relationship from a distance with teachers who continue to operate on the spot, though not ruling out meetings when necessary. This approach was mentioned at the last meeting of the Council of Europe's Education Committee in Budapest (1). It must not be overlooked in an overall political view, particularly as it is likely to attract the particular interest of Ministers of Education.

II.2 Structuring international networks

Distance learning institutions have recently stepped up their efforts to form networks. This supposes first of all that they have a marked identity and the support of the governments to whom they are answerable. This trend towards institutionalisation has gained momentum in recent years.

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(1) Conversation with Mr Stobart.

- Two main forms of institutionalisation

Some states appreciate the need for providers with solid resources to develop distance learning both for higher education and for further training. Distance learning policies take one of two very different approaches:

- the first, which might be termed institutional, is based on the Open University concept. It is dynamically respresented by EADTU. It mainly concerns education ministry departments in the member states.

- the other, which emphasises social demand and the market, is based on partnership and co-ordination. Typical of this approach is the Italian CUD, which groups together universities, regions, telecommunications and industry. Partisans of this approach emphasise that the Ministry of Labour and Employment is also involved in such a policy, particularly with regard to adult vocational training.

The recent October meeting in Brussels highlighted the fact that the Commission and the promoters of both these approaches wish to intensify their efforts to institutionalise these policies in the member states.

- Present efforts towards networking

The experts and distance learning institutions are fully aware of the need for international harmonisation and networking, which is in keeping with the July 1989 Resolution of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly. But a great deal of uncertainty remains as to the means of achieving this.

The Task Force Human Resources, Education and Training announced at the Brussels meeting its intention to look into the co-ordination and international harmonisation of distance learning development with constant resources. In the course of the discussion, a project for an international agency was suggested as one hypothesis among others, but does not appear among the conclusions adopted. Another concept discussed at the same meeting was the establishment of "European study centres", which would serve as contact nodes between distance learning networks. These centres would serve as feeders to enable contacts to be developed, standards to brought closer together for course content, course length and mutual recognition between member states.

They could also crystallise demand from the EFTA countries and East European countries. One such centre will be set up shortly in Vienna and will perform this role in liaison with the Fernuniversität in Hagen. This idea fits in with a project included in the Council of Europe's proposals, viz the establishment of a network of resource centres and gatherings based on existing cultural establishments in the European countries (cf Appendix 2 point III.1).

- The "Budapest Platform"

This is the name of the most significant experiment. It is the result of a decision taken at a colloquy on distance learning held in Budapest in May 1985. ICDE and EADTU were behind this co-ordination

effort. A Steering Committee meeting at Milton Keynes on 15-16 October 1990, at which the Council of Europe was represented, instructed the Platform's Bureau to prepare for converting it into a European distance learning network (EDEN) (1). This network should have an open structure so as to incorporate public and private institutions, associations and existing networks. This process should include close consultation of the Commission and the Council of Europe. It will then be discussed in the middle of next year by another Steering Committee.

The Milton Keynes meeting was attended by observers from East European countries: Hungary, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia. It emerged that the first thing to be done was to find out more about needs in the various countries, a task in which the Council of Europe can play a major part.

III. A situation of transition

The evolving international situation shows that the distance learning institutions are preparing for the mooted rescaling. It is still difficult to say when and how this change will be completed. A hypothesis can, however, be put forward as to how the situation will stabilise, that is to say that distance learning will escape from its fringe position, where it still is in many countries, and become a fully-fledged form of education alongside the traditional forms. Accordingly, it is important to take stock of progress and shortcomings at intervals, in order to suggest action to be undertaken by international organisatiions which can harmonise the trends under way.

1990's intense international activity, which also included an international distance learning congress in Caracas, reflects the increasingly widespread awareness of the usefulness of this mode of learning. The main features to be noted are as follows:

III.1 A substantial community of experts

There is now a large community of experts in various countries and there are a large number of projects and achievements in educational technology. From this point of view, the Commission's policy has provided an undeniable incentive. It should be emphasised, however, that the multi-media training projects which form the core of the COMETT programme do not by any means coincide with distance learning, one of whose distinctive characteristics is the use of writing, both in teaching materials and in pupils' work, and personalised tuition.

III.2 A predominantly technical approach

Many projects and achievements still belong to an "educational technology" approach to provision and not to a user friendly approach. In other words, the schemes put into practice should rely more on analysis, even negotiation of needs, and take much more account of

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(1) The Budapest Platform, Report. Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Budapest Platform, Milton Keynes, 15-16 October 1990, The Budapest Platform Secretariat, Oslo.

cultural practices in the various socio-occupational categories concerned. In this way, the link with social demand would be considerably strengthened.

III.3 Obstacles to networking

These networks of expertise are at present being structured. Depending on the country, they take various forms: traditional institutions, open universities, CUDE-type consortia, regional associations (AUEF) and international associations. These networks' strategies still come up again numerous technical obstacles, highlighted in all the meetings, such as:

- legal and statutory obstacles

These relate primarily to the technical standards for multi-media products, telecommunications, satellite broadcasting, copyright, for both reproduction and distribution abroad of both written and audiovisual material, and certification, both for higher education and for vocational training,

- administrative obstacles

In all countries, distance learning mainly concerns two ministerial departments: education and employment. The report of the Brussels October meeting emphasises insufficient participation by the ministries concerned with vocational training. Furthermore, representatives of ministerial departments in international meetings are from very different decision-making levels, so that for example a section head from one country faces the Director-General of Telecommunications from another.

One of the main reasons for this is that, in many ministries, distance learning is still a fringe activity. To many administrations, it is a mystery. Little is known about how it works, because it works very differently from traditional education. In some countries, for example, there is no inspectorate for this form of teaching. Consequently, the ministry officials do not always have a clear understanding of the mechanisms they can manipulate to control it. It may be wondered whether this mystery in which distance learning is shrouded for the civil servant, further deepened by experts' discourse, is not at present one of the major obstacles to the development of this education technique.

For want of sufficient explanation of the changes it is undergoing, an outdated view of distance learning persists which regards it as as combination of upper secondary school and post office. There are hints in the present situation of conditions for a networking strategy in touch with member countries' administrations, viz:

- in order that they may be more familiar with distance learning as an area of freedom to be used for innovative purposes,

- in order that they may be better informed about its purposes, its existence and validity, which in particular presupposes matching it better to social demand. From this point of view, the meetings this

year have marked some progress, but there are still some areas which have been given little attention, such as young people without skills and disadvantaged population groups.

The change now taking place in status and scale entails making contact with those in a position to provide the necessary impetus: public and private economic decision-makers and those responsible for social policies. These will be in a position to relay social demand to education departments.

Apart from the obstacles, there are still a number of unknowns, two of which weigh heavily in the elaboration of scenarios. The first concerns the qualitative and quantitative growth of the relevant population groups. DECS' first feasibility study emphasised the need for forecasting in this area. The IRDAC study commissioned by the task force echoes this demand. The second unknown, which partly overlaps with the first, concerns demands to be expected from the East European countries joining the Council of Europe's Cultural Convention.

IV. Tentative suggestions for strategy

From an analysis of current developments, it is possible to gain some idea of how distance learning will stabilise. The main features are as follows:

- distance education and training are systems in their own right in all the member countries. This means that they enjoy full recognition alongside traditional training systems, in relation to which they are no longer the exception. Education and Employment Ministries use both types of system as required,

- accordingly, distance education and training contribute just like the other systems to improving training and skills. Logically, attention should be focused on objectives: higher qualifications, improving the skills of the active population, rescuing those who fail and no longer on teaching resources, whether they involve multi-media combinations, course attendance or distance learning courses.

- these systems contribute to the achievement of both national and multilateral training objectives. That is where distance learning systems come into their own because, despite a number of administrative and technical obstacles, they are an extremely flexible "building kit" with which to construct the most varied patterns of instruction, adapted to a wide variety of situations.

This stable situation is far from being achieved, which justifies the effort of an international organisation such as the Council of Europe. The main lines of action are gradually emerging. What follows is a commentary on the proposed activities for the 1991 programme which is appended, but which for administrative reasons is set out differently.

IV.1 Helping distance learning systems to become full-grown systems

There exists a community of experts in the field of distance learning, international networks are forming, but the ministerial departments concerned are observing developments with varying degrees

of attention. There are many reasons for this, but one particularly important reason is lack of information. Experts are producing technical documents which do not always measure up, in either the letter or the spirit, to decision-makers' expectations. The latter are primarily concerned with training objectives rather than methods - we shall return to this in the following paragraph - and do not always have the technical background necessary to understand the experts' discussions. A substantial effort of communication is required to present the unresolved technical questions in a language better suited to the concerns and expectations of decision-makers.

This effort of "metabolisation" concerns the present position with regard to several issues:

- copyright and authors' protection legislation for both written and audiovisual material. The international use of such material for distance learning is at present hampered by such obstacles. The Council of Europe has a specialist committee dealing with this matter (point 1.1 of the Appendix),

- the study on the international validity of certificates. There has been one DECS report (the V BENNI report) which lists disparities and discrepancies at European level. But ways and means have to be devised if the desired and necessary internationalisation is not to remain a dead-letter. Consequently, the recent decision by the Open University to create a European diploma deserves every attention (1.2),

- the present state of progress and remaining difficulties in the vast area of tariffs and technical standards. The international development of distance learning depends on postal and telecommunications tariffs, provisions governing the use of satellites and the harmonisation of technical standards for computer software and products. These issues need to be explained concisely and clearly in order that parliamentarians and decision-makers may make up their minds about the avenues to be pursued in order to attenuate if not to resolve a number of present difficulties. It is not the Council of Europe's business to undertake technical studies. These have been made by the Commission (DGXIII in particular), ITU and other bodies. What is needed is an over-view for the "layman" (1.3).

IV.2 Strengthening the link between distance learning and social objectives of training and qualifications

Greater attention must be paid to analysing present and future needs. This implies changing from an approach hitherto largely based on supply, to an approach based on demand. From this point of view, the effort to link up EAD expert circles with employment and skills circles must be continued. A seminar should be held to deal with this question more thoroughly (III.4)

The first thing is to pick out cases of regional development in which this linkage has worked satisfactorily and to describe them in full detail. Video reporting would be a particularly suitable method. A broadcast programme would moreover make a useful contribution to informing decision-makers more fully (I.5).

Another area in which needs analysis is urgently required concerns the countries of Eastern Europe. Contacts have been made in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia for the purpose of putting in hand analyses based on the same approach as this feasibility study (I.4).

Once these preliminaries have been completed, a "summer school" might be held for decision-makers in order to arrange for satisfactory transfer of knowledge. It would be particularly useful to include specialists in employment policies, in order to foster mutual discussion of specific cases of distance learning development in the framework of international co-operation. In these efforts to help bring about an overall improvement in the level of knowledge, special attention should be given to the problem of the quality of training (II).

IV.3 Helping to develop multilateral use of distance education and training.

This third strategic objective presupposes the existence of well-established international providers working in concert with international organisations. The Council of Europe has brought these providers together and engaged in dialogue with some of them, such as the Budapest Platform, EUROPACE, GLOBAL DIALOG and SATURN.

It would seem natural to associate the group of experts which met in June 1989 with the further development of the operation and consequently that it should meet in 1990 (III.3 of the Appendix). It is also important that the Council of Europe should continue the relationship established with the Budapest Platform, particularly with regard to the intensification of relations with the countries of Eastern Europe (III.2).

Lastly, it would be a good idea to test the emerging idea of a distance learning resources centre. In addition to establishing a centre from scratch, which should be the case in Vienna, another possibility is to use existing networks of institutions, eg cultural institutes and schools belonging to one country and located in others (III.1).

Conclusion

The first part of the feasibility study which is coming to the end after a year gives the impression of having progressed. Contacts have been made with most providers and the proposal made by the Council of Europe for giving more thorough attention to strategy has been extremely well received. Constructive relations have been established with the Commission and complementary sharing of labour between the two organisations is gradually being established.

However, there is still some way to go. Linking up distance learning systems to administrative circles has yet to be achieved, as well as linkage to another area which has been little discussed in this report, industry. Otherwise there is a risk that distance learning as a whole will develop strategies based on a supply approach, gradually becoming more remote from the training and skills needs observed both by decision-makers and by business.

The present feasibility study seeks, in its modest way, to contribute to the development of this form of teaching which is bound to expand very greatly, bearing in mind the considerable training needs which traditional systems cannot meet.
December 1990

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 23 October 1990

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Appendix I

COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL COOPERATION

DISTANCE LEARNING

Consideration of the first part of the feasibility study

Minutes

of the meeting held on 26 June 1990

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FEASIBILITY OF A PAN-EUROPEAN DISTANCE LEARNING RESOURCE

Report of a meeting held on 26 June 1990

I. The Council of Europe's position on distance learning

Mr. J. VIDAL BENEYTO opened by recalling the background to this activity :

- Recommendation 1110 (1989) relating to distance learning, adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly on 6 July 1989;
- the proposed final resolution of the 16th session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education, concerning the development of "open" and distance learning;
- the CDCC decision to carry out a feasibility study.

This feasibility study would comprise two stages:

1. An analysis covering the following:

   - the current situation in Europe, that is, the various initiatives at European level and the most important achievements and projects at national level,
   - the educational requirements in organising effective and coherent distance learning processes,
   - the logistics of achieving this, without losing sight of the need to fit in harmoniously with direct contact systems,
   - the communications technologies available (satellites, cable networks, minitels, micro-computers, etc.); the various types of educational products and their outlets.

2. The development of an operational programme, particularly:

   - definition of the usefulness and the specific role of this project compared to other current initiatives,
   - financing or self-financing,
   - outputs for the member states taking part and for the Council of Europe,
   - proposals for concrete action to fine-tune a pilot model.

The presence at the meeting of representatives of the main associations and authorities active in the field of distance learning would serve to guarantee what the Director of Education, Culture and Sport considered as the central element in the first phase of the feasibility study, that is, the usefulness and pertinence of the Council of Europe's presence in this area.

Mr. J. VIDAL BENEYTO pointed out that the author of the feasibility study, Mr. J. PERRIAULT, had from the beginning been in touch with the main actors in the field, in particular with the EC Commission, so that any programme eventually adopted would be strictly complementary to the COMETT and DELTA programmes.

Following on the accession of Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia to the Cultural Convention, and the requests for accession made by Romania, Bulgaria and the USSR, the Council of Europe provides the natural framework for educational and cultural activities covering the whole of Europe.

In this context, the Council of Europe is very interested in developing distance learning in Eastern and Central Europe.

Finally, the CDCC is most concerned to ensure that distance learning activities, which often give priority to technological and economic dimensions, respond also to cultural and social demands.

II. Proposals put forward during the meeting

The participants presented the activities of their respective organisations and then proceeded to an exchange of views on Mr. PERRIAULT's report. It became rapidly clear that there was a unanimous opinion that the Council of Europe had a definite role to play in the distance learning field, and that this might take the form of the creation and running of a network of current operators, and joint activities rather than the setting up of a European distance learning university. The following specific proposals were made:

1. Initial and continuing education - an ongoing structure linked to a continuous analysis of requirements

In most countries, it is still difficult to evaluate the demand for continuing education and in particular the demand for distance training. It is therefore necessary for distance learning programmes to be linked up to the work of those bodies who study the development of qualifications and the labour market. As a corollary, it is important to encourage actions which provide a better estimate of the needs of the sectors of the population concerned and also their learner profile.

Particular attention should be paid to young people and the working population and also the area of the lower levels of qualification, as regards both refresher training and new qualifications.

With regard to initial training:
- there could be greater use of distance education at the secondary school level,
- higher education could see distance learning as one of the areas which could help it face the increasing load of its future tasks.

Encouragement should be given to studies which analyse current needs, and up-to-date knowledge could be communicated through summer schools.

2. Synergy between providers in the distance learning field

The following is a non-comprehensive list of those operating currently in the field:

- institutions and universities which carry out distance teaching,
- regional and international partnerships between universities, local authorities and businesses, as promoted by the COMETT programme,
- major international associations such as CHANNEL "E", EADTU, EUROPACE, EUROSTEP, EUROTRANSMED, I.C.D.E. and SATURN, and their national correspondents such as ATENA or F.I.E.D. in France. These associations are

willing to work together, to harmonise their activities, in the Council of Europe framework.

During the conference organised in Budapest last May by I.C.D.E. and E.A.D.T.U., it was decided to make a first effort towards coordination, in the field of cooperation with Eastern Europe. A secretariat called the "Budapest platform", composed of Messrs. LEIBRAND (Netherlands), ROLL (Norway) and TRINDADE (Portugal) was set up in Oslo. This body will take part in the wider coordinated effort.

This "distance learning" project should include economists and communication science specialists. It would be possible to do this under the aegis of the Council of Europe postgraduate training programme (3rd cycle).

A second working meeting, to follow on from this one, should be organised in the near future in a Central or Eastern European country, to keep up the momentum.

3. Promotion of a telecommunications reference model, to extend to the whole of "greater Europe", and covering in particular the countries of Central and Eastern Europe

The reference model should take into account not only the large geographical range but also the diversity of current telecommunications infrastructures. It should aim to facilitate the multiplicity of interactions necessary for the development of distance learning on an international scale. It will include:

- satellite broadcasting services
- distance computing
- regional groupings and resource centres
- advanced management systems.

The term "reference model" is important, for this definition implies:

- that is neither excludes nor supersedes the media already in service,
- that it might help to revive certain media, radio in particular,
- that it should not encourage technological overheating but rather develop existing resources, with the emphasis on their harmonious utilisation.

Industry should be involved in this development, particularly that of the Eastern European countries. The schedule must take account of the timetable for equipping those countries with modern telecommunications systems (for example, ISDN).

The model gives due importance to computerised systems which streamline the production of documents (desktop publishing) and ease the management of teacher-student contacts.

The Council of Europe should promote this model:

- by carrying out a pilot study to test its effectiveness in the development of a given region, both from an educational and a management point of view,
- by centralising information on technological developments, costs and experiments, in order to keep the model truly up to date,
- by holding a summer training school for teaching staff, giving perspective on the use of modern educational media,
- by trying to resolve the legal and regulatory difficulties which might prevent its coming into operation.

4. Harmonisation of regulations to encourage the development of distance learning.

The Council of Europe is particularly well equipped to expedite the harmonisation necessary in the following areas:

- recognition and international validation of qualifications. A report on the difficulties involved has already been drafted (report by Valentina BENNI),
- legislation on authors' rights for written courses, audiovisual teaching materials and software,
- postal and telecommunications charges, in particular to bring all rates into alignment with those in force in the countries giving the most advantageous rates,
- legislation on satellite broadcasting of educational programmes,
- standards in telecommunications and multimedia substrates (RAVI,ISO,HDEE standards).

The Council of Europe should give particular attention

to the cultural and social quality of distance learning projects. This could be done by means of international groups of experts auditing developments and projects under way. A list of examples of good practice could thus be drawn up and be made available to those bodies interested. It is also requested that users be associated with this process, for example through user committees.

III Summary of proposed action

Documentation and studies on:

- the requirements of distance training and the learner profile (para 1)
- contribution of a model for distance learning towards the development of a region (para 3)
- technological developments, costing and trials of different distance learning arrangements (para 3)
- evaluation of test cases in distance learning and creation of a data bank of models of good practice (para 4)

Summer school:

- theme: analysis of needs and user profiles (para 1) and technical knowledge of educational media (para 3)

Meetings:

- concertation of major international associations (para 2)
- involvement of economists and communication science specialists (para 2)
- meeting in Eastern Europe to advance the feasibility study (para 2)
- involvement of users (para 4)

Legal and regulatory matters:

- international validation of qualifications (para 4)
- copyright legislation (para 4)
- telecommunications charges (para 4)
- legislation on satellite broadcasting (para 4)
- importing of distance computing equipment into Eastern Europe (para 4)
- standards for telecommunications and multimedia substrates (para 4).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 22 October 1990

CDCC (90) 20
CDCC-ED (91) 3
Appendix II

COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES FOR 1991

DISTANCE LEARNING

- Proposals for action -

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

Following the examination by a group of experts and representatives of the main organisations active in the field covered by the feasibility study on distance education (CDCC (90) 12 and CDCC (90) 19), as well as in consultation with the Commission of the European Communities and UNESCO, it has been possible to identify activities which correspond to needs which have not yet been met and which could be undertaken in 1991 and possibly in 1992.

I. STUDIES AND REPORTS — 230,000 FF

1. Study of the harmonisation necessary concerning copyright and royalties legislation in distance education (co-operation with the Task Force of the Commission of the European Communities) ;

2. Study of the international recognition of certificates and diplomas ;

3. Studies of the cost of telecommunications, legislation on satellite transmission, the importing of tele-informatic material in the Eastern European countries, the telecommunication standards for multi-media supports ;

4. Monographs on the training needs which can be dealt with through international co-operation in distance education : Hungary, Poland Czechoslovakia, particularly in adult education and at university level ;

5. A monograph on the technological developments, the cost and experiments in the different arrangements for distance education, at present being undertaken, as well as the most outstanding achievements in the field particularly in the two sectors mentioned above.

II. TRAINING OF SPECIALISTS FROM THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES — 120,000 FF

Organisation of a summer school on :

- the analysis of the training needs which can be covered by distance education ;

- the use of the different communication technologies (correspondence, video, computers, satellites) bearing in mind the existing infra-structures.

This summer school would be entrusted either to the Rennes CNED, or to the University of Montpellier, with the help of Belgian, British and Spanish universities.

III. SEMINARS ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS : 300,000 FF *

1. How to mobilise the users through networks of cultural institutes and teaching establishments abroad, used as places for resources and for international distance education teachers ? (co-ordinator : UNED place : SAN SEBASTIAN) ;

2. How to increase the exchanges of distance education with the countries of Eastern Europe ? Meeting of the Budapest Platform (co-ordinator : Distance University of Turkey - place : Turkey) ;

3. How to continue and give a specific profile to the action of the Council of Europe to promote an all-European distance learning network ? Follow-up meeting to the 26 June 1990 meeting in Strasbourg (co-ordinator : Ministry of Education, Prague - place : Prague) ;

4. How to increase the potential of adult education through distance education ?

* including the expenses for drafting the working documents by experts